



BAY OF PLENTY POLYTECHNIC

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Buzzwords ...

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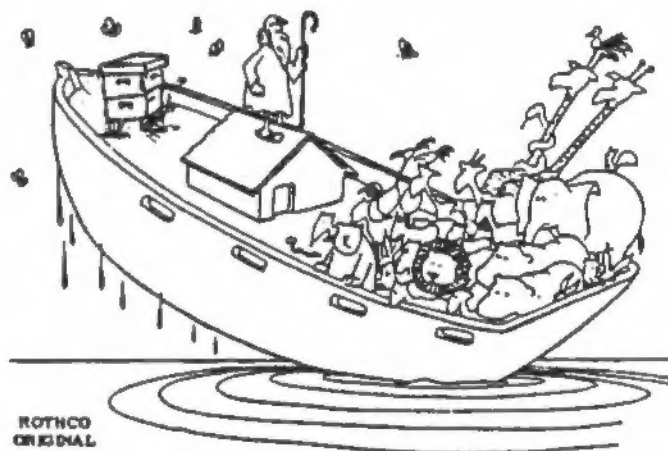
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..... the newsletter for National Beekeepers' Association members

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

This is my first communication to you all since becoming president of your association and I would like to begin by thanking all those who have offered their assistance since I have taken up this new role. One of the great strengths of our industry is the willingness of members to get involved at branch level, in special interest groups such as the Exporters' Association, and on industry committees such as the Disease Control Committee and the Marketing Committee.

There are a number of major tasks ahead for the new executive. These include 1) using the Commodity Levies Act to secure continued funding for our activities, 2) developing Pest Management Strategies under the new Biosecurity Act so that we can continue the Disease Control Programme, especially in light of the passing of remits showing industry support for the goal of eradication of AFB,

and 3) maintaining the Honey Marketing Committee's programme, and especially implementing the new Honey Industry Marketing Plan.

Executive Officer Ted Roberts and I attended a meeting of Parliament's Primary Production Committee in Wellington on August 11 to present our submission on the Commodity Levies Amendment Bill. Many other primary production groups were also represented. They are in a similar situation to us in that they need a Commodity Levies Act which is workable if they are to continue to provide services to their industries.

On August 5, executive members Richard Bensemman and Mervyn Cloake attended a practice headquarters exercise run by MAF as part of their training for a honey bee exotic pest and disease emergency response (EDPR). From the feedback it would appear that both MAF and our executive members benefitted from the session. Richard and Mervyn

were impressed with the efficient way the headquarters was organised. They were also able to contribute some practical suggestions to the participants.

It's good to hear that so many branches have begun to organise their part of the '93-'94 disease control programme. **Hawkes Bay, Bay of Plenty, Southern North Island, Nelson, Marlborough, Canterbury and Otago** branches have all set dates for diseaseathons.

The executive held a telephone conference call to discuss the '93-'94 AFB Disease Control Programme on August 18. An advisory group to the executive, consisting of Richard Bensemann, Russell Berry, Terry Gavin and Alan McCaw from the Disease Control Committee, with assistance from Cliff Van Eaton (MAF) and Dr. Mark Goodwin (HortResearch) held a further conference call on August 31. This advisory group will recommend to executive, at its meeting on September 7-8, the form the disease control programme should take for this season.

At our meeting following conference the executive met with Terry Gavin and Malcom Haines from the **Northland** branch. The executive gave its approval for the **Far North** branch to come out of recess. Members of the Northland branch felt northern members would be better served with a separate branch. Travel times and distances make it difficult for Far North members to attend Northland branch activities, which are centred around Whangarei. We wish the Far North branch all the best.

Frances Trewby, President

OZ HONEY QUALITY CODE

The Australian beekeeping industry recently announced that it has developed the world's first code of practice for assuring honey quality. The code is a joint venture between the Australian Honey Bureau and the Honey Bee Research and Development Council (HBRDC).

Australian honey packers are providing a manual outlining the code of practice to their beekeeper suppliers. Approximately 1000 Australian honey producers are expected to receive copies. As well, a video explaining the concept of quality assurance will be made available to all state and regional beekeeper associations.

According to John McKay, marketing manager of the Australian Horticultural Corporation, the Australian beekeeping industry took the initiative to develop this code of practice to "ensure that Australian honeys satisfy the most stringent domestic and international standards". The industry aims to both safeguard existing markets and ensure that producers are in a position to expand sales into the commercial food and beverage processing markets.

Mr. McKay believes that the Australian honey industry is more disciplined and integrated than its international competitors and is therefore better placed to satisfy ISO 9002 quality requirements. The code of practice is designed to ensure that all packers meet these internationally important quality standards. A number of major Australian honey packing and marketing organisations are already committed to satisfying ISO standards. The code of practice is likely to be fully implemented by the end of 1994.

The code of practice manual was produced in cooperation with the Victorian Department of Agriculture's Quality Management Unit. The manual sets forth guidelines for the maintenance of quality during all stages of production, packaging and marketing. It focuses on areas where beekeepers can have a major influence on final honey quality and colour.

Bee Briefs, NSW Dept of Agriculture, May 1993

MANUKA BY THE CAPSULE

A Gisborne company has started cashing in on the antibiotic properties of manuka honey, publicised by Dr. Peter Molan of Waikato University, by selling the honey in gelatine health capsules.

Gisborne Honey Producers has just won its first domestic order for 100,000 capsules. Managing partner Brian Smith believes the product is a world first. His company is set to supply 1.8 million capsules from raw material worth \$1.2 million. Samples of the capsules, labelled as "nature's own antibiotic", are also going to Asian distributors and an American marketing network.

According to Mr. Smith, work on research and development of the product began about five years ago. The company has spent an estimated \$50,000 on the project. Mr. Smith originally went into beekeeping to supply hives for kiwifruit pollination, but came up with the capsule concept when investigating diversification options.

Samples of honey used in the capsules are tested by the Cawthorn Institute in Nelson to a trademarked Pharm Qual standard. The honey is tested against a range of bacteria included MRSA, *Staphylococcus aureus*, and *E. coli*.

New Zealand Press Association

FROM THE BRANCHES

The next meeting of the **Auckland** branch is scheduled for Thursday, September 23, at the Anglican Church Ha' Papakura. Discussion topic for the meeting will be "alternative returns from beekeeping".

The next meeting of the **Hawkes Bay** branch will be on Monday, September 13, at the Cruse Club rooms, Lee Road, Taradale. During their last meeting the branch discussed the pros and cons of various types of both pollen traps and feeders. They also opened up their nine branch hives last month. The hives are both a good learning tool for new members and a source of extra income for the branch.

NORTH AMERICAN NOTES

During my recent holiday in Canada, I was able to attend the annual Western Apicultural Society (WAS) conference, held at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. There were a number of interesting speakers at the conference, as well as some good discussions during the various social activities. Here's a brief run-down of some of the highlights -

Canadian Border Re-opening - as was reported in *Buzzwords* 54, there is a strong possibility that the Canadian border



with the US may re-open, allowing renewed shipments of queens and packages from the US. The move could have drastic consequences for New Zealand producers since our freight costs are so much higher. It turns out that almost everyone in Canada is against the move, including all the provincial ministers of agriculture, all the provincial beekeeping associations, the Canadian Honey Council, and the Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturalists. Still, that doesn't seem to have stopped the Federal Minister of Agriculture, who seems hell-bent on going ahead with the move regardless. Several people I spoke to said that the situation was not just bad for Canadian beekeeping; it also showed how politicians who are elected to serve their constituents can sometimes usurp the democratic process. A meeting on the issue is set to take place in Edmonton during the first week of September. Sources believe that a final decision will be made at that meeting.

Queen Mandibular Pheromone - Researchers Keith Slessor and Mark Winston from Simon Fraser isolated this pheromone and were able to synthesize it for commercial use. The pheromone is now produced by Phero Tech, a company in British Columbia, and is marketed as a pollination attractant (trade name: Fruit Boost). Fruit Boost has proven very successful on pears and cranberries and the company would like to carry out trials on kiwifruit. Interestingly, the researchers have found that the amount of pheromone (expressed in queen equivalents/ha!) is critical to pollination success. Too much pheromone can reduce pollination as much as too little, while the right amount can double the number of bees visiting the flowers. They have also found that the bees spend more time out of the hive per visit when the pheromone is applied correctly. What they haven't figured out yet, though, is why the pheromone works at all, since queen mandibular pheromone isn't usually associated with floral marking by honey bees. It's normally only found inside the hive.

Changes in Canadian Beekeeping - According to Don Dixon, Provincial Apiarist for Manitoba, the reduction in honey prices in the mid-'80's caused by changes in the US subsidy programme had a greater affect on Canadian beekeeping than the border closure for queens and packages. Colony over-wintering was already accelerating in Manitoba before the border closure and the number of package bees brought into the province was declining. But the biggest reason hive numbers decreased dramatically in Canada in the late '80's was the fact that honey prices went from CDN 90 cents/lb to less than 40 cents/lb. The good news, though, is that 1993 is the first year that colony numbers have increased in Canada since 1986. Currently, according to Don, the break-even point for prairie honey producers at CDN 60 cents/lb is 150 lb (68 kg) per hive. Fortunately, the average production is 200 lb (91 kg) per hive!

Varroa Mites - These mites are having a profound effect on US beekeeping, with one beekeeper at the conference reporting a reduction in his hive numbers over one year from 2000 to 800 colonies. However, according to Eric Mussen, Extension Apiculturist in California, colony reductions aren't showing up in the statistics because of the migratory nature of beekeeping there and beekeepers' ability to replace hive numbers by making early splits. Feral

colonies aren't so lucky, though, and a California researcher has found that the mite is destroying most such colonies. Beekeepers are also finding that one chemical treatment per year isn't enough to control the mites, since the mites seem to spread quite quickly from hive to hive. The varroa mite has also been found along the US-Canada border in both Manitoba and British Columbia and is now regarded as being firmly established in the lower mainland area around Vancouver.

Cliff Van Eaton

FROM THE MARKETING COMMITTEE

The NZ Honey Quality Standards - In last month's *Buzzwords* I explained how the Marketing Committee was first and foremost concerned with "quality" issues. All the proposed marketing strategies have to evolve from, and be based on, the central theme of "quality".

Sue Jenkins and I have started working on the first draft of what will become known as the NZ Honey Quality Standards (NZHQS). In carrying out the work I must say that I'm quite impressed, firstly, by Sue's knowledge, and just as importantly, by how complex the whole issue of beekeeping husbandry and honey production really is. You certainly realise this the moment you try to come up with a national quality standard.

The Marketing Plan - Copies of the marketing plan are being sent to all branch secretaries during the first week of September. You'll note that some of the work is now dated and that we have already deferred some actions to stay within budget. However, the overriding strategies are all valid and we look forward to your feedback on the programme.

Watch Out Or Your Labels Will Cost You Double - Despite everything you've been told or believe about honey yourself, the law is very clear on what can and cannot be said on food labels. Don't get carried away and make exciting and provocative claims about honey (especially its newly discovered anti-bacterial properties).

I believe it, you believe it, but your local Health Protection Officer isn't allowed to (yet) and he or she has to be very firm on any food packaging/labelling that makes nutritional or therapeutic claims. If you refer to antibacterial activity in honey, you can run afoul of the law.

We are aware of two packers who have been given 6 months to reprint their labels and stop making such claims. The Health Protection Officer concerned has also written to officers in all other regions warning them of possible honey label transgressions in their areas.

The Marketing Committee's advice is as follows:

- You can't win against the Health Department; and we should be pleased the Health Protection Officers are doing their jobs. They stop any "honey hoons" from going silly with "over-the-top" (or is that "off-the-hive") claims that make us all look like the lunatic fringe.

- Discuss with your local Health Protection Officer what you intend to put on your label. New labelling regulations come



HONEY INDUSTRY TRUST FUND

Applications for funding close on 15 August and 15 February. Forms available from PO Box 4048, Wgtn.

into force on 1 January 1995 and you will be surprised at what you won't be able to say on your product label.

- Make sure any information you get from the committee, or from your own network, about the food and therapeutic values of honey is publicised by your local media. This can be more effective and more credible than putting something on your own packaging.

A NZ Honey Showcase - the Marketing Committee wants to build up a showcase of the different types of NZ honey and honey-based products, together with any promotional material beekeepers may have done. We can't make any guarantees, but these products may get some further publicity during the next twelve months.

If you want to participate, please send samples to NZ Honey Marketing Group, c/- Floyd Marketing, 4A Scott Street, PO Box 32, Blenheim.

Sorry we can't afford to pay you for your items, but hopefully a showcase which includes your products will compensate for the expense.

Peter Bray Goes Nationwide - Nick Wallingford was responsible for getting Peter Bray on Kim Hill's National Programme morning slot last month. It was a great interview that did us all proud. Thanks, Peter and Nick!

Bill Floyd, Honey Marketing Committee

BEE BRAINS AND HUMAN LEARNING

Can honey bees help scientists understand how adult humans learn? Researchers at the University of Illinois are convinced they can. In the July 15 issue of the journal *Nature*, insect biologists Susan E. Fahrbach and Gene E. Robinson describe structural changes that occur in the brains of bees when the insects leave their domestic chores to tackle their most challenging and complex task - foraging for pollen and nectar. They believe that such changes also occur in human brains.

The article describes the work of neuroscience graduate student G.S. Withers, which focused on the "mushroom bodies", a region of the bee brain so named because it appears mushroom-shaped when viewed in cross-section. The region is closely associated with learning and memory.

Withers's study of bee brain sections showed that the mushroom bodies are re-organised when a bee becomes a forager. She was also able to show that this was not simply due to aging of the bee. In a key experiment, young honey bees were forced to become foragers by removing older bees from the colony. The mushroom bodies of these young foragers, who were only about one week old, mirrored those of normal-aged foragers.

The findings suggest that nerve cells in the mushroom bodies receive more informational inputs per cell as the bee learns to forage. In order to be a successful forager, a bee must learn how to navigate to and from its hive and how to collect food efficiently from many types of flowers.

According to the article's authors, the implications for neuroscience go far beyond the beehive. There could also be an application to human studies because the structure of bee brains is similar to - but much simpler than - human brains. The authors believe the discovery opens up a new area of research on the relationship between brain and behaviour. One fundamental question this research raises is "which comes first?" Do changes in behaviour lead to changes in brain structure? Or do the changes in brain structure occur first, in preparation for the changes in behaviour?

BeeNet

COMVITA AT EXPO

Comvita NZ Ltd has been chosen, along with Canterbury International and Ariki New Zealand, as retailers in the New Zealand pavilion at the Asian Expo '93 in Taejeon, South Korea. The Expo runs for three months, from August 7 to November 7, and is expected to attract more than 10 million visitors from both Korea and Japan. New Zealand is participating at the Expo along with 112 other countries.

Korea is a huge and fast-growing market for New Zealand and this year is likely to nudge out Great Britain as our fourth biggest export market. Mike Pattison, Expo '93 Commissioner General for New Zealand, says the New Zealand presence at Expo will help consolidate this relationship at a time when the Korean government is lowering import barriers and Koreans are discovering New Zealand as a tourist destination.

Comvita will be in the retail area of the 828m² New Zealand pavilion and will have on sale its range of royal jelly, propolis, and honey products. The pavilion features static and audio-visual displays of New Zealand's peoples, art, cultures, art, primary industry, technology, and tourist attractions. The ground floor is designed as a walkway which takes visitors through a cave entrance and culminates in a landscaped area featuring a waterfall and live New Zealand vegetation.

Export News, August 9, 1993

BUZZWORDS IS ...

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